

Hello to everybody. At a recent department head meeting the question was asked, what would you want the public to better understand about your office? I decided in this month's comments I would try and answer that question. I will only touch on three today.

First are the Rules. In some areas the Commissioners are given quite a bit of room to work, such as setting the county's budget. In other areas we are working with a pretty narrow set of rules we must follow. When I say rules I am referring to State Statute, most statutes are not optional, they are mandatory; with good reason the last thing the public needs is politicians making up rules as they go along. The statutes provide for a consistent system of doing things, and for the most part works pretty well. There are however times when the rules can make a seemingly easy decision unbelievably difficult. A decision that from the outside looks like a no brainer, from the inside is almost always more complicated than most people would think.

The next thing would be Responsibility. The commissioner job is a part time job with full time responsibility. We are in charge of the county's money, we oversee the Road and Bridge Department and the Planning and Zoning Dept, all of which could be a huge liability to the county if not handled responsibly. Some things that are not under our control are the various departments run by other Elected officials. We do set their budgets, but we really have no say in the day to day operations. Often we field complaints about the Sheriff or the Attorney from an unhappy citizen when really the complaints should be taken directly to the department head.

Last is the Emotion that goes into doing a job of this nature. We are no different than anybody else when it comes to emotion. We have things that we are dealing with in our personal lives same as anybody, but we have to leave those outside the commissioner's room in order to make rational decisions. We must also have compassion. It is impossible to see someone's point of view unless you can put yourself in their shoes, and that can't happen without compassion. People sometimes are very upset when they come to see us because the issues are important to them. We cannot get upset, even if somebody is abusive or is known to be a pain in the butt we still must listen to them. It is part of the job. Every hard decision is emotionally draining because very seldom are you 100% on the yes or no side. When it is time to vote you don't have the option of voting 60/40 or 48/52. You must cast a yes or no vote. It is not something that can be taken lightly, when the decision you make could affect someone's life.

I will close by saying that before passing judgment on any public board's decision, please take a minute to think about some of these things. As always your input is valuable and we look forward to hearing from you.

Until next time,

Tim Millikin
Platte County Commissioner